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FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2972
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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0968
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0709
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0366
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN 0007
RUEHAT/AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM 0008
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0012
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0403
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0052
RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT 0228
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SUBJECT: LIBYA IMPOSES NEW CURRENCY REQUIREMENT FOR TOURISTS

REF: 07 TRIPOLI 987

¶1. (SBU) Post received January 3 a copy of a note sent from the GOL's Civil Aviation Committee to airlines announcing that as of 7 January, all tourist visa holders -- except bearers of Egyptian and Tunisian passports -- will be required to present USD 1000 or the equivalent in another convertible currency as a requirement for entry to Libya. On January 6, the Consular Section was able to confirm with the MFA's Head of Consular Affairs, Ahmed Ameish, that the law would take effect January 7.

Ameish stated that travelers checks, bank statements and credit cards would not/not be accepted; the requirement is for "currency". (Note: The Egyptian and Tunisian Embassies have confirmed that their citizens are not/not subject to the new requirement. End note.)

¶2. (SBU) Similar to the passport translation requirement (reftel), this law has apparently been on the books for a number of years, but was not enforced in the recent past. Ameish provided no reason for the change.

¶3. (SBU) Foreign airlines (British, KLM, Swissair, Lufthansa) indicate that they will not/not be checking currency holdings at the time of check-in at European airports. As in the case of the passport translation, it is not clear to us, other diplomatic missions or the airlines how the currency requirement will be implemented. We will likely only obtain a clearer picture over time as the parameters of who is turned back shape up. The U.K. and Italian Embassies are advising on their respective Foreign Office websites that citizens from their countries traveling on tourist visas comply with the new rule.

¶4. (SBU) The Embassy received notification of this requirement via a copy of the Civil Aviation notice that was sent to airlines, which Swissair forwarded to us. We received no notification from the GOL. We learned from the U.K. Embassy on January 6 that the Libyan People's Bureau in Rome notified EU embassies there about ten days ago that the new requirement would be implemented. The EU Embassies in Tripoli learned about the currency requirement shortly after the New Year's holiday from their counterparts in Rome and have since met in Tripoli to discuss options for engaging the GOL.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: There is considerable speculation as to the reasons for implementation of the rule. The U.K. and Italian missions are convinced that the new strictures will be broadly applied; the German and Dutch missions have insisted they will not apply to European and North American travelers. Citing unconfirmed reports, the latter contend that the strictures are designed to prevent more sub-Saharan African guest workers from entering Libya. While it is not clear which sub-Saharan Africans are able to enter Libya visa-free and which obtain tourist visas

on arrival, the Civil Aviation note specifies that even citizens of countries exempted from entry visa requirements are subject to the new rule (except, again, Egyptians and Tunisians). As with the passport translation issue, the MFA was unable to articulate any reason for the currency requirement (beyond that it was already on the books), nor did it provide any advance notice to missions in Libya. Both changes will be enforced by Immigration, rather than the MFA's Consular Affairs Department. End comment.

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